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VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM ON TEACHING & LEARNING (VSTL) 2020

Redefining the Practice of Teaching and Learning

E-PROCEEDING

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INTRODUCTION

The very first Virtual Symposium on Teaching and Learning 2020 has been organised by the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Cawangan Johor Kampus Pasir Gudang in collaboration with Unit Penulisan dan Penerbitan, BPJIA UiTM Cawangan Johor Kampus Pasir Gudang.

This symposium has provided an opportunity for researchers and educators to share their ideas and insights in the name of education. This symposium has also provided a platform for the exchange of knowledge and expertise in relevant fields and promoted exploration of potential collaboration for future research.

This event has the goal to bring academicians and researchers in education together from across the globe.

Researchers and authors have been invited to submit original high-quality extended abstracts. Papers are solicited on, but not limited to:

a. E-Learning

b. Innovation and Creativity in Teaching and Learning

c. Assessment and Evaluation in Teaching and Learning

d. Best Practices in Teaching and Learning

e. Others (related to Teaching and Learning)

All accepted extended abstracts have been presented by participants on the symposium day via Google Meet.

All accepted, registered and presented extended abstracts have been published in this e-proceeding with e-ISBN. Authors of selected extended abstracts will be invited after the symposium to submit a full paper for Scopus-indexed Journals/ a special issue in the Insight Journal UiTM Cawangan Johor. Best Papers and Best Presentations have also been awarded in this event.

FOREWORD BY ASSISTANT RECTOR



Dr. Haryana binti Mohd Hairi

Assistant Rector, UiTM Pasir Gudang

Assalamualaikum wbt and good day everyone.

I am pleased to welcome all of you to the Virtual Symposium on Teaching and Learning, VSTL, 2020. Congratulations for your participation, fruitful sharing session and discussion for the symposium.

Today, we have witnessed educators across institutions, disciplines and expertise, coming together to share the insights, experience, and practices in teaching and learning. I bet that everyone has had your fair share of not only getting inputs and ideas from others, but also share your own perspectives in the field of teaching and learning.

Ladies and gentlemen,

VSTL 2020 is one of the many virtual academic get-togethers, which could have been organized in the conventional way, with face-to-face meetings and sessions. However, considering the many aspects in our current situation, with the seemingly unending COVID-19 fiasco, this symposium is successfully done on a virtual platform today without neglecting the ultimate purpose of such programs. I believe that all of us today have gained so many positive inputs for various aspects in teaching and learning even without physically meeting each other, which is no less than if the program is done conventionally.

It is high time that such an event took place to highlight the remarkable contribution, in which “the new norm” of teaching and learning took place in our current education situation. I am proud to know that, through a glance at the list of presentations planned for today, reveals the amazing diversity of these areas. Congratulations to all of you.

COVID-19 pandemic has not only changed our way of teaching and learning, but also forced us to become more creative and innovative. In some cases, we could not meet our students face to face, and had to use virtual methods, as how we met today to carry out our duty as teachers and educators. This can be easy for some of us, but a mounting task for others. However, the responsibility of educating our learners still needs to be carried out, in one way or the other, no matter how challenging it is. Thus, the purpose of this symposium is for us to

not only share the traditional practices but also new methods and techniques in online or distance learning.

I hope that VSTL 2020 has been a good platform to inspire us, the educators to try out new teaching techniques and the experts to share their insight and valuable knowledge in this area. This could also be the route to a unique opportunity to share and exchange with counterparts from different specialties the advancements in your field. I also hope that our meeting will not stop today and can promote exploration of potential collaboration for future research.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the committees and UiTM Cawangan Johor, I would like to thank all of you for your support and I hope that you have had fruitful and rewarding exchanges from this program. I would like to also congratulate the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang for organizing the symposium, together with Unit Penulisan dan Penerbitan of BPJIA, UiTM Cawangan Johor Kampus Pasir Gudang. It is my hope to see more programs such as this in the future.

Before I end my speech, I would like to share a quote by Phil Collins;

“In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn”. May all of us here never stop learning, and continue inspiring the learners, and each other in our jihad to share and value the knowledge that we have.

I hereby officiate the closing ceremony and announcement of awards of Virtual Symposium on Teaching and Learning 2020.

All the best to everyone, and may all our effort be blessed. Thank you.

VSTL18

Understanding Primary School English Teachers' Responses about Class Size to Students' Achievement in Pengerang Zone, Kota Tinggi District, Johor

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Abstract

The debate over class sizes has been intense over the past decades in the field of education. Therefore, this study aimed to gain an understanding of the scenario of teaching different class sizes from the perspectives of the teachers, in particular relating to students' achievement in English subject. The purpose of this study is to gather and understand teachers' responses concerning class size to students' achievement, particularly English Language teachers in primary schools. This study is significant as it has highlighted teachers' agreement on smaller classes increasing students' academic performance. The findings of this study were gathered through means of questionnaire involving 37 primary school English teachers in Pengerang zone, Kota Tinggi district, Johor. The quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed using GNU PSPP Statistical Analysis Software for the descriptive analysis. The findings of this study revealed that all the 37 participants agreed that smaller class sizes increase students' achievement in English Language; hence they agreed the significance of class sizes related to academic performance. Moreover, several issues associated with large classes are discussed from the English teachers' perspectives.

Keywords: class size, students' achievement, primary school, English language teachers.

Introduction

Quality education means a system that will produce the human capital which is knowledgeable and capable in several talents. However, there are several entwined elements towards ensuring a quality education; some would be educational policies, teaching strategies, school administration; and the most significant and influential, the teachers. Undoubtedly, teachers play the most influential role in assuring that every child in the classroom gets the equal chance to a quality education (Hashim,1999).

Therefore, this study looked at teachers' responses in terms of their experiences and perceptions while dealing with small and large number of students in classrooms. Hence, the purpose of this study was to gather and understand teachers' responses about class size to students' achievement, particularly English Language teachers in primary schools. This study determined to what extent the English teachers at primary schools agree or disagree about reviews of class size to students' achievement. With the purpose been outlined, the following research question was developed;

Research Question 1 (RQ1)*: Do primary school English teachers agree or disagree that smaller class sizes increase students' achievement in English Language?*

Generally, class size is defined as the number of students enrolled in a particular class or lesson. Therefore, class size can be defined as the number of students in a classroom, specifically the number of students being taught by individual teachers in a classroom; or extend to the number of students participating in learning experiences which may or may not take place in a traditional classroom setting. For the purpose of this study, as taken from Blatchford and Russell (2018), *small classes are those consisting of 13 to 17 students while large classes typically have more than 31 students*.

Literature Review

Numerous studies were conducted over past decades investigating the relationship between class size and students' achievement. Most of the studies tested the common hypothesis of *'Small classes clearly increase students' achievement'.*

Project STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio) was a four-year experiment conducted by the state of Tennessee to research if the students attending smaller classes scored better than the ones attending large classes. It was found that test results were comparatively higher for pupils in the smaller class. Similarly, Leahy (2006) conducted a survey among 20 middle school teachers to gather their observation on class size effects on student achievement. This research revealed that despite the personal differences, mostly the teachers strongly agreed that smaller class sizes indeed increase students' achievement in most subjects. Additionally, several previous researches suggest that smaller classes are easier to manage in terms of disciplining compared to large classes (Blatchford & Russell (2018); Leahy (2006); Jepsen & Rivkin (2009)).

Methodology

This study was conducted among 37 teachers who taught English Language subject in primary schools in the zone of Pengerang, Kota Tinggi district. Johor. The participants were 16 males and 21 females aged between 25 to 55 years old; with a minimum one year of teaching experience and maximum of 29 years of teaching experience. Furthermore, 29 of them were optionist English teachers while the remaining 8 were non-optionist English teachers who did not have their degree majoring in English Language. Typically, all the respondents taught in classes with average number of students between 26 to 37. A majority of the respondents were from the national schools (Sekolah kebangsaan) at 81.1% while 10.8% from Tamil medium schools (SJKT) followed by 8.1% from Chinese medium schools (SJKC).

As to obtain data to answer the RQ1, this study employed the quantitative research design through survey method using questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from Leahy (2006). It was a quantitative questionnaire based on a four points Likert Scale measure. It consisted of 9 questions about the teachers' perception of class sizes and their impact on their students' learning. Consequently, the data gathered was interpreted using measures of central tendency, respectively the mean, median and mode. In addition, standard deviation for each item in the questionnaire was also calculated to inform how measurements for a group are spread out from the average (mean), or the expected value.The data gathered through the questionnaire was organised and calculated using GNU PSPP 1.2.0, which is a programme for statistical analysis of sampled data.

Data Analysis

All the items in the questionnaire have been analysed statistically through measures of central tendency, standard deviation, frequency distribution and percentage calculation as shown in Table 1 and 2. The following is interpretation of the scores identified and how they are relevant to this study.

Table 1 Frequency Count for each Item in the Questionnaire.

	Statement	N	SD	D	A	SA
1	Class size is a main factor that is closely related to student achievement.	37	0	3	19	15
2	Larger class sizes affect student achievement negatively.	37	0	2	18	17
3	Larger classes have more discipline problems.	37	0	0	19	18
4	Language teachers have difficulties grading the students' work, including essays and papers.	37	0	2	11	24
5	Smaller classes allow more time for teachers to spend on language skills which can increase student achievement.	37	1	2	5	29
6	Smaller class sizes lead to substantially faster gains in reading and writing due to more individualised instruction.	37	1	0	17	19
7	Class size reductions are costly and should not be implemented in schools.	37	10	20	4	3
8	Small class size is merely a beneficial factor.	37	2	3	17	15
9	Classroom management processes are smoother in small classes compared to larger classes.	37	1	0	6	30

***Note**: N=Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree*

Items 2,3 and 4 which respectively have *94%, 100% and 65%* of agreement imply that teachers generally perceive smaller classes to allow more time for them to spend on facilitating the learning process effectively which can increase students' achievement significantly. The frequency count also shows that teachers were highly concerned with class size since it determines decisions related to classroom management, pedagogical approach and directly affect students' achievement as well. This can be observed in *Items 5 and 6* in the questionnaire which seeks responses regarding chances of individualised instructions in smaller classes with a high percentage of *78% and 51%* respectively.

Table 2 Mean, Median, Mode and Standard Deviation Scores for each Item

Item	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
1	3.35	3	3	0.588
2	3.37	3	3	0.639
3	3.56	4	4	0.502
4	3.29	3	3	0.661
5	3.51	4	4	0.651
6	3.43	3	3	0.647
7	1.97	4	4	0.442
8	3.13	3	3	0.855
9	3.83	2	2	0.833

As for *Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9* in the questionnaire, the mean scores are exceeding 3.26 which can be interpreted as a very positive response for the statements given. All the statements in those seven items are regarding the importance of class sizes generally and how bigger number of pupils in a class contribute to issues such as large workflow, choice of pedagogy, disciplinary problems, time constraint and finally leading to the delayed acquisition of reading and writing skills. Based on mean score interpretation by Amin et.al (2009), these high mean scores for all these items show that the participants agree strongly with the statements on benefits of reduced class sizes.

As for *Item 9* about classroom management processes, the mean score is *3.83*. This imply a very positive result since the participants agree to the statement, thus teachers agree that classroom management processes in smaller classes flow easier with less disruptions and opting to teach smaller classes will be better. For *Item 8*, the mean score is *3.13* which can be interpreted as a positive response where the statements explain that class sizes could be one crucial factor in determining a successful teaching and learning process.

Only Item 7 which inquiries about cost of class size reductions received a very low mean score at *1.97*. This is considered as a negative response; however, it implies that despite the high cost, teachers are looking for the government to implement class size reductions in schools. All the mean scores and standard deviation calculated solidify that most teachers agree with the statement that smaller class size affects student achievement positively. It was clear that all the items in the questionnaire received a majority of agreement with a huge difference in the percentage calculation, mean scores interpretation and a low standard deviation affirming the mean calculated for each of them. Therefore, it could be concluded that all the participants who were primary school English teachers do prefer teaching small classes; hence *agree that smaller class sizes increase students' achievement in English Language.*

Findings and Discussion

The results of this study have highlighted teachers' preferences and agreement on the effects of class size on students' achievement in English Language subject. Numerous significant inputs have been derived from the data analysis. Firstly, all the participants who were primary school English teachers prefer teaching small classes due to several reasons. These reasons began with being able to employ variety of pedagogical approach to reach the learning goals, lesser issues with classroom management processes, and lastly, being able to build and maintain a positive relationship with their pupils which inadvertently affect the academic achievement and motivation of pupils.

Leahy's (2006) study insisted that class size reductions will be effective in reducing the burden of teachers while also enabling them to plan their lessons and execute them in a more effective way catered to the individual learners in their classes ensuring better academic performance. While Finn et. al. (2003) reviewed the sociological and psychological theories related to class sizes and affirmed that students tend to behave positively in smaller classes improving their academic achievement.

Consequently, the data gathered in this study revealed that all the 37 participants agreed that larger class sizes could cause a significant decrease in student achievement and perceived as their strong preference for teaching in smaller classes, hence this answers RQ1.

Conclusion

After a thorough discussion of findings, it is affirmed that primary school English teachers particularly in Pengerang zone, Kota Tinggi district agree to the notion that smaller class sizes increase students' achievement in English Language. It is concluded that class size plays a significant role in the teaching and learning processes; encompassing areas such as classroom management, availability of resource materials, effective use of space and most importantly, academic achievement. Ministry of Education should take into consideration the issues related to the teaching of English in small and large classes prior to implementing new programmes or policies with regard to improve teachers' knowledge and skills concerning teaching procedures and other related administrative duties. The findings gained imply that the teacher trainees should be prepared with guidelines about managing bigger classes. In addition, some efforts of reforming the appropriate teacher-student ratio in schools need to be initiated by the educational officials in all the schools, districts, states and in the ministry. It is advocated that these different officials work together in restructuring and implementing successful class size reductions.

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